

Working together to build a better future for the Northside

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About this newsletter

The Northforce Newsletter, launched in May 2007, highlights some of the City's efforts to improve livability in north Minneapolis.

To subscribe to this newsletter, visit the City's Web site at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/subscriptions and click on "Northforce." To view past newsletters online, go to www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/residents/north.

About Northforce

Northforce is the City's coordinated strategy to address the challenges facing the Northside and integrates the work of City departments and community partners to address safety, health, housing, economic and infrastructure issues.

This coordinated strategy builds on the resources already being deployed on the Northside and uses new and creative ways to improve livability in north Minneapolis.

To learn more about Northforce, visit the City's Web site at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/residents/north.

Plan outlines steps to address youth violence

City, county, school and community leaders have been working for the past year to map out a strategy to attack the epidemic of juvenile crime plaguing our community. After listening to young people, parents, crime victims, residents and professionals who work with young people, the Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee presented its plan to the Minneapolis City Council. On Jan. 18, the Council and Mayor R.T. Rybak voted to approve the plan.

Over the course of the next three months, the City will hire a coordinator to help committee workgroups develop strategies, solicit funding, recruit volunteers and seek partnerships with government agencies, business associations and community, faith and neighborhood groups.

While the plan addresses all Minneapolis youths, it targets those ages 8 to 17 who live in the Folwell, Hawthorne, Jordan, McKinley and Phillips neighborhoods. These areas will receive special attention because of the disproportionate toll violence is taking in these neighborhoods. Of the 57 homicides in Minneapolis of all ages in 2006, half occurred within a 6-square-mile area of north Minneapolis.

The plan also calls for extra focus on youths who are at a higher risk of being perpetrators or victims of crime. This includes youths who have had a truancy violation or school suspension, are in unstable families, had encounters with police, are gang members, or who have been victims or witnesses of violence.

One of the hallmarks of the plan is its recognition that youth violence is a public health crisis — not simply a criminal justice issue. Treating the problem as a public health concern allows for a multifaceted response that addresses the root causes of youth violence. This approach better positions government agencies to work across jurisdictional boundaries to involve youths, parents, teachers, clergy and health providers in addressing the report's four goals:

- 1. Connect every youth with a trusted adult,
- 2. Intervene at the first sign that a young person is at risk for violence,
- 3. Restore young people who have gone down the wrong path, and
- 4. Unlearn the culture of violence in our community.

These goals are supported by 34 recommendations that touch upon the services offered by the City, county, libraries, parks and community organizations.

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Safety Initiatives

Youth Violence: Blueprint for Action

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Here are a few examples of the recommendations:

- Provide year-round bus service to give youth safe reliable transportation to services and activities.
- Seek stronger penalties for people who sell and distribute illegal guns to young people.
- Increase programs for preventing teen pregnancy.
- Increase mentoring opportunities with caring adults.
- Establish a help line to give young people a safe, confidential way to report trouble or seek help.
- Go door-to-door to reach at-risk youths and connect them to educational and employment opportunities.
- Increase restorative justice programs for offenders.
- Expand sentencing options to include behavioral training and therapy.

The 32-member committee was co-chaired by Mayor R.T. Rybak, Karen Kelley-Ariwoola, Minneapolis Foundation and Ellen Lugar, General Mills Foundation. The plan is posted at

 $\underline{www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/YouthViolencePrevention_home.asp.}$

Northside crime rate drops in 2007

In 2007, Minneapolis made significant progress in decreasing crime throughout the city. Moreover, the Northside led the city in crime reduction. Citywide, violent crime was down 13 percent compared to 2006; on the Northside, violent crime fell by 16 percent.

Other 2007 Northside statistics show that rape is down by 26 percent, robbery and arson are down by 19 percent, and auto theft is down by 18 percent. Total Northside crime is down by 9 percent. Arrests were up 3 percent compared to 2006 and up 47 percent compared to 2005.

A strong focus on livability issues, community partnerships and technology enhancements all played a role in these significant reductions. To achieve these results, 4th Precinct officers and staff aggressively targeted drug sale locations, enforced livability crimes at problem convenience stores, kept an eye on vacant properties, partnered with businesses, stepped up truancy enforcement and investigated violent gang members.

Technological resources supplemented these efforts. Last year, 50 new cameras were installed in the Broadway, Lowry, Lyndale and Penn area. In addition, the ShotSpotter gunfire detection system was installed in a 2-square-mile area of north Minneapolis.



After a ceremony celebrating the opening of the new Juvenile Supervision Center, visitors stopped by the center to meet staff and learn about the center's services.

New juvenile center offers services to prevent future run-ins with the law

One of the goals outlined in the Youth Violence Blueprint for Action has already become a reality. On Jan. 17, City, County and community leaders officially opened the new Juvenile Supervision Center.

Located in Room 21 of Minneapolis City Hall, 350 S. Fifth St., the center serves people ages 10 to 17 who are picked up by the police or sheriff for low-level offenses such as breaking curfew, truancy or vandalism.

The center's opening represents a change in how the City and County will deal with youthful offenders. Previously, youths weren't always assessed for needs or connected to services aimed at preventing future run-ins with the law — they were simply held until a parent or guardian arrived. Now, they will be screened by staff to determine their risk for committing future criminal acts. At-risk young people will be referred to agencies that provide mediation, counseling or other support that can get them back on the right track.

The center will be staffed 24/7 by The Link, a Minneapolis nonprofit agency. Based on past experience, officials estimate that approximately 4,000 young people, primarily from Minneapolis, will be brought to the center in 2008. Police anticipate that the center will be a significant factor in reducing violent crime since juveniles accounted for nearly half of all arrests for violent crimes over the past two years.

The center is under the direction of the Hennepin County Board and the Curfew-Truancy Joint Powers Agreement, which includes Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Public Schools. Funding is derived from Hennepin County (about \$610,000) and the City of Minneapolis (\$110,000).

Home & Business Initiatives

Aldi opens at Penn-Lowry Crossings

Aldi's grand opening on Jan. 26 marked another milestone in the City's efforts to revitalize key commercial areas in north Minneapolis. The new grocery store is the anchor tenant in Penn-Lowry Crossings, an \$8 million redevelopment project on the corner of Penn and Lowry avenues.

The project encompasses three buildings. One building houses the 14,000 sq. ft. Family Dollar Store which was renovated in 2007. The second commercial building has 32,000 sq. ft. and opened on Jan. 21. It houses Aldi, Resource Inc. Employment Action Center and, coming in a few months, a new Subway restaurant. A third building will be constructed in 2008 and will be home to a bank or financial institution.

Thanks to neighborhood input and Wellington Management, Inc.'s efforts, Penn-Lowry Crossings is larger in scope than the project originally outlined in the City's request for proposals. After listening to area business owners and neighborhood associations, Wellington made several changes to its original plan, including improving its street frontage, moving parking to the back and adding a second story. Although the City of Minneapolis paid about \$250,000 through grants from the State of Minnesota and the Metropolitan Council to clean up pollution, Wellington received no government subsidies for the \$8 million project.

Penn-Lowry Crossings, which is part of a larger renovation of the Lowry Avenue corridor, now provides an anchor for commercial development and paves the way for new investment in the area. In 2008-2009, Hennepin County will complete the western half of its Lowry Corridor project, which calls for a complete rebuild of the roadway and enhanced boulevards, bike lanes and transit.



A Jan. 26 ribbon cutting marked the grand opening of Aldi's, the anchor tenant in Penn-Lowry Crossings.

Livability Efforts



Hundreds of neighbors stopped by Webber Park Library on Jan. 12 to celebrate its reopening. The event featured comments from City and County officials, musical performances, storytimes, a scavenger hunt and the chance to meet the Bur Bur storybook characters.

Webber Park Library reopens

Thanks to the recent consolidation of the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Library systems, the Webber Park Library and two other previously shuttered libraries reopened on Jan. 3.

Webber Park is now open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon to 8 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. All three of the reopened libraries feature collections that have been reorganized for easier access, additional computers and new materials.

In addition, the county board approved a Capital Improvement Plan that sets aside \$15 million to replace Webber Park Library with a larger library. Planning for the new library is about to begin; the construction timetable will be determined as planning progresses.

The newly merged system is called the Hennepin County Library System and includes 26 suburban libraries and 15 Minneapolis libraries. The combined library system offers more than 5 million books, CDs and DVDs (in 40 languages) and nearly 1,600 public computers. Library visitors can continue to use their current library cards.

Merger negotiations began last February when two advisory groups recommended that the City and County pursue consolidation as the best option for ensuring the long term financial stability of Minneapolis libraries. Without action, Minneapolis libraries would have faced additional rounds of service cuts. The historic merger took effect Jan. 1 following action by the Hennepin County Board, Minneapolis City Council, Mayor R.T. Rybak and Minneapolis Public Library Board.

Campaign aims to make fitness fun

While rising rates of obesity and diabetes are a problem throughout the United States, these health threats are even more evident among low-income groups due to less access to healthy foods, preventive health care services and recreation facilities. Health disparities are in evidence right here in Minneapolis where the rates of diabetes and obesity in north Minneapolis are double that of the rates in southwest Minneapolis.

One way to address these health risks is for folks to get 30 minutes of activity each day. The good news is that the second annual Get Fit Twin Cities campaign aims to make fitness more fun. The Get Fit program encourages people to form teams of two to 10 family members, friends or co-workers who agree to encourage one another and track their daily minutes of activity. Registered team members are eligible for prizes and access to free or reduced-cost fitness opportunities.

To learn more or register online, go to www.getfittwincities.org. You can also register by mail by completing the form inside a Get Fit brochure. Brochures are available at local libraries and Park and Recreation facilities. The registration deadline is March 1, and the team competition runs until April 24.

4PAC donates toys to PAL



The 4th Precinct Advisory Council's (4PAC) first holiday toy drive was such a success that the group plans to make the drive an annual event. The mittens, board games, recreation equipment and cash they collected were donated to the Police Activities League (PAL). The league is a youth crime prevention program that builds trust and understanding between police and young people through interaction at educational, athletic and recreational activities. Sandra Kellogg (second from left), PAL, and six community service officers (CSOs) were on hand to collect the donations at the December 4PAC meeting. Pictured above are CSOs Lincoln Vincent (kneeling) and, from left to right, Jordan Davis, Jeremy Foster, Cheryl Goodman, Matt West and Connor McDonough.

You Can Help

Volunteer at the library

The Minneapolis Library is on the hunt for new volunteers to serve as desk greeters, tour guides and neighborhood liaisons. For more information or to apply, contact Barb McKenzie, library volunteer coordinator, at (612) 630-6120 or blmckenzie@mplib.org.

Coming Up

Workshops on flood area study

Feb. 12 and March 4
6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Folwell Park Community Center
1615 Dowling Ave. N.

The Minneapolis Public Works Department is holding workshops on periodic flooding that occurs in the area that is generally bounded by Victory Memorial Parkway and 39th, Lowry and Humboldt avenues north. They would like to hear about residents' experiences and share information about possible solutions. Even if you aren't experiencing a flooding problem, you are welcome to attend to learn how you can be part of the solution. For more information, contact Lois Eberhart, project manager, at (612) 673-3260 or lois.eberhart@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

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4th Precinct Advisory Council

Tuesday, Feb. 196:30 p.m. - meet and greet / 7 p.m. - meeting 1925 Plymouth Ave. N.

Northside residents and businesspeople are invited to meet officers and hear an update on precinct activity. Attendees may also bring addresses of problem properties. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month. For an agenda, contact Mary Rainville at (612) 673-2947 or mary.rainville@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

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